

From sequence to form and function: Acoustic and multimodal variation in feedback

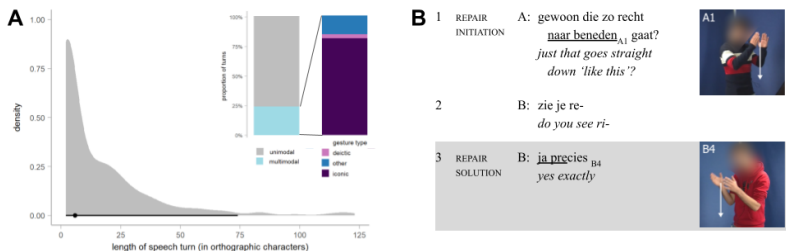
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Studying response tokens both at scale and in depth sets the empirical foundations of investigating how people use these interactional tools to coordinate collaboration, accomplish joint action, and scaffold complex language. We discuss two complementary approaches to better understand form and function of these ubiquitous elements in interaction: 1) a maximally scalable method to investigate acoustic variation across a dataset of around 500 hours of social interaction across a diverse set of languages (Figure 1A), and 2) an in-depth analysis of multimodal variation, investigating how response tokens can be used with different gestures in repair solutions. Both approaches explore different dimensions of variation.

Acoustic variation: Across 16 languages (Figure 1C), we find that continuers make a minimal nasal as well as at least one other response token format available — but how do participants exploit such differences in acoustic form interactionally?



Multimodal variation: We zoom in on responses to so-called ‘restricted offers’ (i.e., repair initiations such as “You mean X?”), and find that iconic gestures can make the meanings of response tokens more precise.



Both case studies start out from a well-defined sequential environment (continuers and repair solutions) which enables a careful exploration of variation in form and function of response tokens, which helps to broaden and deepen what we know about feedback.